EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) The Government is concerned about the misuse of the open India-Nepal border for activities inimical to the interest of the two countries by vested interests and is seized of the matter. The Governments of India and Nepal have agreed that they would not allow their respectrive territories to be used for such activities.

Measures have been taken to enhance co-operation with Nepal, particularly with regard to implementing effective border management. A bilateral institutional mechanism has also been evolved which includes a Joint Working Group on Border Management and Home Secretary Level Talks to jointly address issues relating to maintenance of peace and security and prevention of criminal activities in the India-Nepal border areas. The Special Service Bureau is being deployed along the border with Nepal to strengthen security in the border areas.

Discussion with British Foreign Secretary

1254. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government held discussion recently with visiting U.K. Foreign Secretary Mr. Jack Straw and apprised him regarding attack on the Parliament on 13th December, 2001;

(b) whether U.K. Foreign Secretary publicly accused Pakistan and demanded a firm/much more effective action against activities of Kashmiri terrorists operating from Pakistan and against "calling terrorists as freedom fighters" as reported in Hindustan Times dated 29th December 2001; and

(c) if so, the other countries with whom India held similar talks recently and outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) During his visit to India on 27 February 2002, U.K.'s Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs, Mr. Jack Straw met

with External Affairs Minister and Home Minister and was sensitised regarding India's concerns on terrorism.

(b) As reported in the Hindustan Times on 29 December 2002, Mr. Straw on 27 December 2001, made a statement on India-Pakistan relations expressing concern at the terrorist attack on our Parliament and calling for continued action by Pakistan on "terrorist groups operating from their territory". In an interview to BBC Radio 4 on 28 December, Mr. Straw also said that "you cannot go on turning a blind eye to terrorist activities by simply lebelling those terrorists Kashmiri freedom fighters".

(c) India has held talks with other key countries including the USA and Russia on this issue. US Secretary of State Colin Powell during his visit to India on 17-18 January 2002 had stressed that President Musharraf must match his words with action. Russian Foreign Minister Ivan Ivanov during his visit to India on 3-4 February 2002 had strongly condemned cross border terrorism and underlined the need for Pakistan to cooperate in stopping infiltration of terrorists into India.

Public relations war with Pakistan

1255. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Indian losing public relations war to Pak" published in the Hindu dated 18th January, 2002;

(b) Government's perception thereto;

(c) the steps taken to improve intelligence of public sector and diplomatic work for arresting the alienation of public opinion abroad; and

(d) whether the army position taken after terrorist attack on Parliament has caused the waning of initial advantage in the diplomatic front?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Government have seen the report appearing in the Hindu on 18th January 2002.